



2014-2015 AESN Case Study

School: Fraser Heights Secondary **District:** #36 Surrey

Area of Focus: Student Level

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Question/Focus Area: How are students able to make connections between Musqueam First Nations, significant topics learned in the course material and contemporary issues?

Scanning: Our students come from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds but lack knowledge about the holistic learning and cultural practices of First Nations People.

Focus: Each year different Aboriginal themes emerge through social media and news media that students could use to inspire comprehensive research that combines multiple areas of prescribed learning outcomes from the BC First Nations 12 course. In the fall of 2014 preparations were underway between Musqueam First Nation, the Museum of Anthropology (MOA) at UBC, and the Museum of Vancouver (MOV). They partnered together to explore Musqueam's ancient landscape and living culture *c̓əsnaʔəm, the city before the city* — a series of three distinct exhibitions, opening in January 2015. The unified exhibits connect visitors with c̓əsnaʔəm — one of the largest ancient village and burial sites upon which Vancouver was built — sharing its powerful 5,000-year history and continuing significance.

We chose to focus on using this unique opportunity of the Musqueam First Nations exhibit and worked to partner with the Mary Point at Musqueam and their legal and archeology departments to present students with a range of current issue information from the Musqueam perspective. By linking together major themes from the BC First Nations 12 course and re-focusing them to the specific Musqueam context could we inspire students to become engaged with important, current and ongoing Aboriginal topics of issue and concern to the Musqueam?

Hunch: Our hunch was that students could build on their developing background knowledge during the first few weeks of the course through a variety of classroom resources (print, video, news articles, hands on activities and cultural presentations), and then in turn be inspired to follow their interests and passions in a variety of areas to build and research their own inquiry topics that would relate to and build on the presentations and activities they would experience during their day long field trip to Musqueam.

Taking action: To build students prior knowledge the class took part in numerous cultural presentations as well as worked with a variety of resource materials. Some of the best highlights were: drumming and singing with Nelson Leon, fishnet weaving with Richard Pierre, the multimedia Residential Schools Presentation with Dallas Yellowfly, researching First Nations

and European world views on First Contact using sources with quotes from Oral Tradition and European Journals, and finally, the opportunity for students to write down any questions of concern and have Richard regularly choose 3 or 4 questions to answer each time he came as well as have other presenters choose student question from the Question posters to answer. For the inquiry project, students started by developing personal KWL charts pertaining specifically to Musqueam to pinpoint their areas of interest and further brainstorm questions to investigate during our field trip. Students did research prior to the visit in order to ensure the availability of balanced and abundant resources before choosing their inquiry question. Students were expected to gather information and evidence to help them answer their question before, during and after our visit.

Checking: Students often came early, regularly asked questions, actively engaged with guest speakers, and followed their inquiry research with passion during the two weeks pre and post field trip as they delved into their individual group topics with avid interest. Some students made sure to make use of their opportunity to connect with experts and ask questions during the trip, while others decided to shift the course of their research based on new information. Students (in groups and individually) presented on their inquiry research passions, many of which tied together multiple themes and areas of study within the course. The success of this strategy will be reflected in the students' ability to make sense of and combine multiple issues into their projects.

Reflections/Advice: Due to our school's high ELL and International Student population, many of these students who register for BC First Nations 12 have not had prior Social Studies courses in Canada so many enter the course with only background knowledge developed in ELL courses. Approximately 40 to 50% of the students fit this profile. To ensure that all students had some common understandings (to ensure strong varied groupings) the inquiry project wasn't started until approximately halfway through the semester, though students had started analyzing Aboriginal Issues in the news, and thus were becoming familiar with a range of current topic issues. There is a significant level of rote memorization prior knowledge that must be developed for the provincial exam, e.g. study of the Guerin and Musqueam court cases in depth is very important but students must have some general knowledge of several other landmark court cases (Delgamuukw, Van Der Peet) for the multiple choice as well as essay portion of the exam. Balancing time needs as well as general and specific content needs of a vast and diverse course while ensuring students having sufficient background knowledge, resources and time for inquiry projects, and keeping all students on task and completing their projects in a timely fashion, makes such an undertaking a massive classroom management and subject area balancing act.

Students truly enjoyed being engaged in meaningful current issues and being able to make direct connections to the people at the centre of those issues who are working and advocating for change. Many students chose to complete an inquiry project and viewed it as a valuable curriculum choice to meet their learning goals. Such an inquiry project that ties learning themes together in concrete real meaningful ways for students is definitely worth the work and time involved. Students enjoyed following their passion and making real work connections to today's issues.